



Menorquin 34

Two modern motorboats from Menorca

Designed and built by sailors, the Menorquin 34 and 42 are aimed at sailors too – or anyone who wants a capable, comfortable and stylish semi-displacement motor cruiser, says David Harding



Menorquin 42

For some of us, hearing the words 'Mediterranean' and 'motorboat' in the same sentence conjures up images of boats that are fast and flashy; fair-weather playthings for people we might choose to have little to do with in the normal course of events.

There are, however, all sorts of motorboats in the Med – and, lest we be accused of stereotyping, of motorboat owners too. Of course we're all aware of the little open fishing vessels that still ply their trade away from the glitz of expensive marinas fringed by over-priced boutiques. What we might not know is that one of these breeds of little open fishing boat has evolved into a range of practical, semi-displacement motor-cruisers likely to be of particular interest to sailors hanging up their winch handles.

Not surprisingly, when we feature motorboats in PBO these are the sort we tend to test – rugged, go-anywhere motorboats that won't force you to stay in harbour when people are leaving without hesitation in sailing yachts half your size. These are motorboats you're happy to admit to your sailing friends that you own and that won't lead to your being ostracised at the yacht club. Think Nelson, Seaward and Hardy and you're on the right lines.

The names we know

These three well-established ranges have their origins in northern Europe – in Britain, to be precise – where you might expect such boats to come from. So you might be surprised that the new name hoping to get in among them comes from the Mediterranean. It's less surprising when you consider that, as their name suggests, the Menorquins come from

Menorca. There's a reason why it's known as 'the windy island'. And although the current generation of models is new to the UK, boats from the Menorquin stable have been around for nearly 40 years.

Tradition with a twist

it all began in 1978 when Juan Sastre Bernat started building production versions of the traditional double-ended Menorcan *llaüt*. Over the years he introduced progressively longer, roomier and more powerful designs, adding buoyant sections aft beneath the waterline to reduce squatting and increase speed without compromising the visual appeal of the round sterns.

Juan's son José is now in charge, and the Saga Group – which includes Sasga Yachts and the Menorquins – has expanded its interests to include marinas, a charter company, commercial property and a yacht-maintenance division.

The boats have also seen significant developments since 2010, when Inigo Toledo was commissioned to update the range. I first came across Toledo, of Barracuda Yacht Design, in 2002 when testing the Ro 330 – a fast, attractive and well-mannered cruiser/racer built by Ronautica Yachts. As well as being impressed by the boat, I learned that the designer had studied naval architecture at the Southampton Institute and worked with both German Frers and Reichel/Pugh before setting up on his own in the well-known coastal city of Madrid. His designs range from the Ro 330's little sister, the 260, to one-off commissions, both sail and power, up to 190ft (58m) or so. Toledo has also been involved in the Spanish America's Cup challenge and project management for the Spanish Royal Yacht.

Updating sympathetically

The new designs are very different from the Menorquins of old. His brief was to create boats that were faster, roomier, more efficient and more modern in appearance while still being sea-kindly and retaining elements of the distinctive *llaüt* styling; hence the vertical stems, the bow and stern posts (harking back to the days of timber construction) and the canoe sterns.

It's not easy to turn a boat that has always had a relatively slim hull, pointed at both ends, into one that's capable of competing with the best of today's semi-displacement motor-cruisers. To see how they had turned out, I went to Menorca with Nick Edgington of Edge-Water Marine, who had just taken on the distributorship for the UK. At this point I should mention that the boats have also been promoted as *Minorquinos*, but the branding has now reverted to the original Menorquin.

Menorquin 34

Introduced in 2016, the 34 is the newest of the range. Her big sisters are the 42 and 54, with a 68 due to hit the water next year. Sasga realised the importance of offering a boat of a size that would introduce new owners to the range, even if a 34-footer costing around £300,000 might not be everyone's idea of a starter boat.

Then again, it's a lot smaller than the 42 and more abstemious in its running costs too – a consideration if you're switching from sail to power. The 34 is harnessed to a pair of 225hp Volvo D4s, giving a top speed of around 22 knots. At a comfortable cruising speed of 13 knots they will be drinking around 45lt (10gal) per hour. Yanmar's 6-cylinder, 220hp alternative is due to be discontinued in a year or so pending a replacement. In the meantime it remains an option and still comes with a fuel-consumption gauge as standard. Volvo charge an extra £1,000.

While owners can choose a single Volvo 300hp, every owner has so far has opted for twins. Each engine has its own fuel tank and batteries, and the boat's generous beam (12ft 6in/3.80m) combined with the full-sectioned hull provides ample space in the engine room. In fact it's one of the roomiest engine rooms I have seen, with the tanks in the wings and excellent access all round. Day-to-day access is via a hatch in the cockpit; otherwise you can hinge up the sole almost in its entirety. The engines, tanks and everything else could be removed if necessary (and it's the same on the 42, though the tanks are in a separate compartment beneath the saloon). That's reassuring to know. José says that after 40 years of building, the yard has experienced most of the things that can go wrong.

It might seem strange to start a test of a motorboat by diving into the engine compartment and wondering what

happens if you ever need to change one (or both). Apparently no one else bothers but, having heard about a yard that had to cut a large hole into the side of a well-known production motorboat to change a fridge, I think it's no bad idea to check these things out.

Cabin comforts

What most people are interested in is the accommodation. For a 34-footer the Menorquin is commodious to say the least, with 1.9m (6ft 3in) of headroom anywhere you would expect to be able to stand up. There's ample stowage (even if you find the odd tank or bow-thruster under some of the bunks), berths are a decent length and the finish throughout, in teak or oak, is



A high helming position and large window area give excellent visibility from the wheelhouse

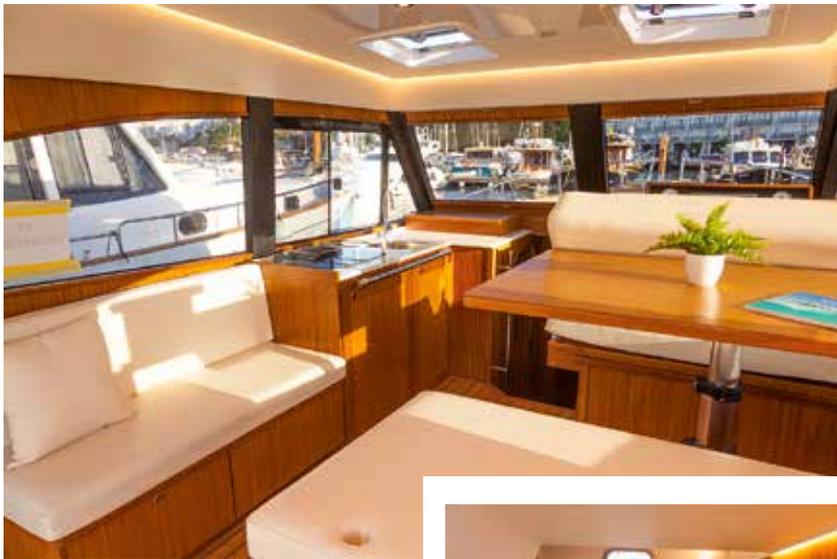
hard to fault. In fact, the attention to detail is impressive. Doors shut positively, magnetic catches hold them open, sole boards are a precise fit and nothing rattles under way.

The master cabin is in the bow, with a berth 2m by 1.5m (6ft 6in x 5ft). It shares a well-appointed heads with the twin-berth guest cabin further aft that runs across the full beam of the hull.

Inevitably, the central feature of the accommodation is the wheelhouse, with the helm station to starboard opposite the galley. Two bi-fold doors open up its full width to the cockpit which, with the shelter



Blue-water motorboating – but the Menorquins are not only for the Mediterranean



The wheelhouse/deck salon is the central feature of the accommodation...

provided by the substantial overhang on the back of the wheelhouse and the optional stowage/seating units in the stern, becomes an extension of the interior. Or, thanks to its large window areas and generous height, you could say the salon becomes an extension of the cockpit.

If you didn't know the Menorquin's size, you would probably guess you were on a boat of at least 11m (36ft). Calling her a 34 might be stretching the truth a little, because the hull is 9m (30ft) long and the bathing platform takes the overall length to 10m (32ft 10in). Nonetheless, it's easy to understand the builder's reasoning because she feels so big, and calling her anything smaller might make her sound rather pricier.

Whatever the size and nomenclature, the ergonomics work: every cubic inch of space is put to good use and practical touches abound.

Sensible design

All too often, moving forward on a powerboat means shuffling gingerly along a precariously narrow ledge while clinging on to grabrails. One slip and you're in the 'oggin. Not so on the Menorquins. Not only are the side decks wide enough to walk along, but they're also protected outboard by teak-capped bulwarks of knee height topped with stainless guardrails. It makes a



...and beneath it is the twin-berth guest cabin running across the full beam

change to be able to go forward without feeling like a mountaineer scaling a ledge. When you reach the bow you find a sun-lounging area on the cabin top, an anchor windlass and a bow roller.

Having hopped on to the wheelhouse roof of the 42 to take photos of the 34 at sea and found a smooth surface underfoot, I was pleased to note the non-slip finish on the 34. Few details seem to escape the team at Sasga.

Sasga in a seaway

To people familiar with planing powerboats of this size, the Menorquin's top speed of 21 knots might sound rather pedestrian. With many planing hulls, however, you can only achieve anything like top speed on a millpond, whereas boats like the Menorquin will still maintain a respectable lick when conditions kick up. She also has a Category A rating under the RCD. Whatever you think of the RCD (see PBO July 2017), this separates her from most motorboats of similar size.

While conditions on our test didn't exactly



A roomy and well-protected foredeck

test her to the limits, the 15-18 knots of wind we encountered off Menorca's east coast kicked up a fair seaway. We made directly into it at 13 knots in reasonable comfort; only at 15 knots did we start slamming occasionally. For a high-volume 30ft boat in such conditions, that's not bad going.

A little steering was needed to keep her on track with the seas on the beam – perhaps a consequence of the relatively beamy hull. Down the waves, however, she demonstrated good directional stability and was less prone than many to 'bow steering', partly because the keel is cut away forward rather than running the full length of the hull as it often does on more traditional semi-displacement designs.

A noticeable feature of her performance is the constant fore-and-aft trim as speed increases. She's in full displacement mode up to 8 knots (2,000rpm) before the bow starts to rise almost imperceptibly as she breaks through the displacement barrier, with 2,500rpm taking her to 11 knots. The high helm seat means you never lose visibility over the bow. Another 500rpm brings up 15 knots on the log, and full chat is 3,500rpm.

Consumption with the twin 225s ranges from 15lt per hour at 8 knots, giving a range of 340 miles from the 650lt (143gal) in the tanks, to 43lt per hour (200 miles) at 13 knots. All these figures are approximate, and our own revs and speeds varied slightly from those published.

Across the rev range, noise and vibrations levels were pleasantly subdued. Until you start asking too much and experiencing the occasional thud, it's a very comfortable ride. But then it is really fair to expect to make 15 knots into waves of 3-4ft on top of a rolling swell in a boat that's only 9m (30ft) long? Throttling back to 13 knots is no great hardship, and for sailors it seems a speedy and civilised way to get home. Many a whizz-bang 40-knots-in-flat-water motorboat would have to limit its speed even further and would still be breaking your spine in such conditions.

PBO VERDICT

A boat with this much space in such a short hull will inevitably look a little chunky, but the Menorquin carries it off surprisingly well. While she's not inexpensive, you can see where the money goes. What she achieves in just 9m (30ft) is remarkable.

TECH SPEC – MENORQUIN 34

Price (delivered and commissioned UK):
£298,054 (inc. VAT)

Length inc. bathing platform:
10.00m (32ft 10in)

Hull length: 9.00m (29ft 6in)

Beam: 3.80m (12ft 6in)

Displacement (light ship):
8,500kg (18,740lb)

Draught: 1.10m (3ft 7in)

Engines: 2 x Volvo D4-225hp

Fuel capacity: 650lt (143gal)

Maximum speed: 21 knots

Typical cruising speed: 15 knots

Fuel consumption (cruising speed):
58lt/hr (12.8g/hr)

Range (cruising speed): 170 miles

RCD category: A

Designer: Inigo Toledo

Builder: Sasga Yachts, Menorca

Distributor: Edge-Water Marine Ltd,

Website: www.sasgayachts.co.uk



Menorquin 42



The wooden stem post is a traditional feature of the Menorcan *Illaüt*

More length on the 42 allows relatively less beam and freeboard for greater elegance, efficiency and comfort of motion. The substantial extra space gives you the option of having the galley in the wheelhouse (as on our test boat) or forward to port. You can also have a flybridge, either from new or retrofitted if you change your mind later.

Because the fuel tanks are forward of the engines, which are separated from the accommodation by the tanks and an extra bulkhead, noise levels are even lower than on the 34. You would expect the bigger boat to feel quieter, smoother, more comfortable and more spacious than her smaller sister, and she does. Interestingly, the owner of our test boat had chosen a more basic specification without the teak decks, the passerelle and some of the trim that we had on the 34.

It's notable that he twin Volvo D4-300s don't use a lot more fuel than the 34's 225s. Top speed is about the same, though you can maintain higher speeds in a seaway.

As on the 34, little seems to have been left to chance when it comes to the installation of or access to the boat's vital systems. You just have to accept that finely-tuned, electronically-controlled



A Menorquin 42 under construction, showing the PVC foam core and the fuel tanks forward of the engine room

engines fitted to today's motorboats are now the norm and hope the technology keeps working.

Construction

Sasga build all the boats at the own yard in Menorca, vacuum-infusing the hulls and using a PVC foam core in both the hulls

and the hand-laid decks. Features include a collision bulkhead in the bow, the bottom part of the forward space being foam-filled. Hull-to-deck joints are bonded and then screwed at 20cm (8in) spaces. On the 42 and larger models, interior wiring is run inside double-thickness bulkheads that add strength and sound insulation.

TECH SPEC - MENORQUIN 42

Price (delivered and commissioned UK):

£462,000 (inc. VAT)

Length inc. bathing platform:

13.20m (43ft 4in)

Hull length: 11.98m (39ft 4in)

Beam: 4.00m (13ft 1in)

Displacement (light ship):

11,260kg (24,824lb)

Draught: 1.10m (3ft 7in)

Engines: 2 x Volvo D4-300hp

Fuel capacity: 1,200lt (264gal)

Maximum speed: 22 knots

Typical cruising speed: 15 knots

Fuel consumption (cruising speed):

64lt/hr (9.5g/hr)

Range (cruising speed): 281 miles

RCD category: A

Designer: Inigo Toledo

Builder: Sasga Yachts, Menorca

Distributor: Edge-Water Marine Ltd,

Website: www.sasgayachts.co.uk

PBO VERDICT

The Menorquin 42 does exactly what a bigger sister to the 34 should do. Both boats combine ruggedness, good performance and seakeeping qualities, practicality, excellent finish and attention to detail with extraordinary amounts of well-planned accommodation and styling that's engagingly different. It's very, very cleverly done, and you have to salute the designers and builders for pulling it off.

